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ABSTRACT

A social learning theory approach to counselor supervision is conceptualized as a teaching-learning situation, in which counseling is viewed as a specific, trainable set of skills. In light of this approach, a four quarter graduate counselor education program, focusing specifically on the training of social learning therapists, is proposed. The supervision process in this model encompasses four stages: imparting and training of specific skills, supervision of actual counseling sessions, self-monitoring, and program completion. During the first stage, the trainee learns generic verbal and nonverbal counseling skills through modeling, reinforcement, behavioral rehearsal, and self-as-a-model. In stage two, the trainee counsels community clients and achieves skills mastery through peer feedback and individual and group supervision. In stage three, the trainee masters self-monitoring skills, which refer to the ability of the trainee to objectively assess and evaluate his own counseling performance. The skills are acquired through observation, feedback, and personal counseling. The fourth and final stage of the program involves certification of program completion. Supervisors, following this model, are specifically selected based on their training and experience in teaching and counseling, as well as their background in social learning theory. (BL)

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# Applications of Social Learning Theory: A Counselor Supervision Model

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Running head: Counselor Supervision

## Applications of Social Learning Theory: A Counselor Supervision Model

Rather than defining supervision as a therapeutic process (Patterson, 1973; Rogers, 1951), a social learning approach to counselor supervision is conceptualized as a teaching-learning situation. The primary focus in this approach is the creation of specific, measurable and observable changes in the knowledge and skills of trainees and the promotion of specific changes in the cognitions and/or behaviors of the clients they counsel (Hosford & Barmann, 1984). Within this context, the process of supervision includes a variety of didactic and experiential components that are primarily based on empirically validated social learning techniques. These techniques include, but are not limited to, vicarious modeling, self-observation, behavior rehearsal, covert imagery and reinforcement.

Perhaps the primary theoretical rationale for this model is that counseling is conceptualized as a set of complex, interrelated behaviors which, like any other set of behaviors, is learned. The learning of these behaviors, again like most other behaviors, is assumed to follow basic learning principles. Therefore, this model considers and approaches counseling as a science and not some intuitive art that the fortunate few who are born "lucky" or "gifted" are able to conduct. Instead, it is viewed as a specific, trainable set of skills. The conceptualization of counseling as a science is advocated in this

model for it is only through empirical investigation that we can gain useful, generalizable information with which to help the ultimate raison de etre of counselor supervision -- the client.

## Overall Structure of Counselor Education Program

In formulating this supervision model, certain assumptions are made in regards to the overall structure of the graduate counseling program in which the model is to be implemented. First, the process is conceptualized to encompass a four-quarter training sequence after which the trainee either graduates with a basic M.A. degree in Counseling Psychology or selects a specialization to enter (e.g., Marriage and Family Counseling, School Counseling, etc.).

The next assumption is that the overall theoretical orientation of the entire program is that of Social Learning Theory. This presupposes the selection of faculty members with background, experience and interests in this area and the explicit presentation of the program to prospective applicants as having this primary orientation. It is hoped and encouraged that the students will be exposed to a variety of counseling theories and therapeutic approaches during the program but the primary goal is to train social learning theories and therapists. By having this primary focus, it is hoped that the program will avoid a common pitfall of many counselor education programs --

the training of "jacks of all trades, masters of none." Instead, prospective applicants choose and apply to this program knowing full well what will be offered and what won't be provided. Furthermore, prospective employers of graduates will also know the orientation of the students and their background.

In accordance with this theoretical orientation, the final assumption is that the overall goal of the program is the preparation of counselors who are proficient in all aspects of the counseling field that are conceptualized as being necessary for becoming a "good" social learning therapist. Specifically, these requisite skills are:

1) Generic counseling relationship skills;

2) Observation, assessment and monitoring skills;

3) Research and statistics skills;

4) Knowledge of specific social learning techniques and their applicability; and

5) Knowledge of learning theories and principles.

It is assumed that the coursework in the entire program will be coordinated and focused on the intensive and extensive training of a counselor with these skills.

The admissions process will be based upon past academic performance, graduate entrance exams, past counseling experience, and personal interviews. Unfortunately, there has been little supporting empirical evidence for admissions criteria that predict future counseling success. Therefore, the admissions' process will follow the guidelines established at UCSB (Atkinson, Staso, & Hosford, 1977) while empirically testing it throughout the years. This process involves weighing equally the admissions areas of a) past academic performance, b) personal interviews, and c) past counseling experience.

## Process of Supervision

The following model of supervision is based on a four-quarter training sequence, but can be easily modified to fit within a three-quarter or two-year program. Basically, the goal of the program is to move the student from a neophyte trainee with minimal or no counseling skills to a "coping model" counselor who possesses the basic counseling skills mentioned earlier and who is capable of being their own supervisor and capable of seeking out any additional resources as needed. There are four stages in this model:

Stage I. Imparting and Training of Specific Skills

Stage II. Supervision of Actual Counseling Sessions

Stage III. Self-Monitoring

Stage IV. Completion of Program

While successful completion of Stage I is necessary for advancement to Stage II, Stage III is an ongoing process that occurs throughout the students' duration in the program and Stage IV is the final assessment and evaluation of the trainees' counseling skills.

Stage I. Imparting and Training of Specific Skills.

As mentioned previously, counseling is conceptualized as a complex set of skills that, like any other set of behaviors, can be acquired through appropriate techniques predicated on basic learning principles. To learn a complex set of behaviors, such as counseling, the most efficient and productive approach is to partition the set into smaller components that are then individually taught. In Stage I, the focus is on the training of the basic counseling behaviors that are regarded as "generic" counseling skills. By generic skills, it is meant that they are basic interviewing skills that can be (and are) utilized in any therapeutic approach. These skills include both verbal and nonverbal counselor behaviors that, as explained by Ivey, Normington, Morrill, & Haase (1968), suggest to the client that the counselor is "...aware of, and responsive to the communications of that individual and (is) communicating this attentiveness" (p. 2). Maintaining eye contact, attentive body posture, reflective responses and adequate verbal following are examples of these interviewing skills.

Upon entering the counselor education program, it would be optimal to attain an accurate assessment of each individual trainee's competency in relation to these skills and then develop and administer an individualized training package for each student. In reality, however, the resources necessary to accomplish such an assessment are typically not available. Additionally, there are conceptual problems with assessing a trainee immediately upon entry into a counseling program given the anxiety and uncomfortableness that is often encountered when first entering a graduate program. Given this absence of initial assessments, the entire group of trainees are approached en masse during the first quarter of the program for the training of the generic counseling skills.

While this training program will focus on both nonverbal and verbal behaviors and use an identical training sequence for both, the initial attention will be on the nonverbal interviewing skills, e.g., maintaining eye contact, attentive body posture, etc. The primary rationale for this initial focus is that by beginning with the least threatening set of behaviors, the trainees' anxiety will be minimized. This is based on the hypothesis that in the initial stages of video feedback, exposure to one's own verbal and nonverbal behavior is the most threatening condition while focusing on only one of these components will be less threatening.

This minimization of anxiety is crucial as it has been well demonstrated that the disruption of skill acquisition due to anxiety can be exacerbated when observing one's own anxiety (Ho, Hosford, & Johnson, 1984; Neilsen, 1964; Perlberg, Peri, Weinreb, Nitzan, Shimrod, & O'Bryant, 1971; Steward & Steward). Indeed, Kimball and Cundick (1977), in their reviews of the effects of self-observation, noted that, "Many studies have revealed that this feedback initially produces a very direct and threatening confrontation" (p. 377). By focusing first on the nonverbal behaviors, the trainee is able to acclimate him/herself to the process of videotaping and being observed with a minimum of this potentially disruptive anxiety. Additionally, by focusing initially on nonverbal behaviors, the trainee will begin to acquire the knowledge necessary to construct self-modeling tapes while attending to explicit, observable nonverbal behaviors that typically are more readily identifiable than verbal behaviors.

Procedures. The training sequence utilized for teaching both nonverbal and verbal behaviors is identical. The basic premise of this sequence is that specific social learning techniques are appropriate for the imparting of counseling skills. The techniques used include modeling, reinforcement, covert imagery, behavioral rehearsal and self-as-a-model. In general, the model is designed to present the relevant theoretical rationale and basis for the behavior, demonstrate the behavior by another model, have the trainee role-play and

practice the behavior, and ultimately, have the trainee self-model the behavior.

The core component of this training sequence is the se of the Self-as-a-model technique as devised by Hosford (1981). In the self-as-a-model procedure, the counselor trainee learns from observing only positive portions of his or her own behavior. That is, the trainee observes only those instances of behavior in which he or she is performing in the desired manner. Instances of undesired or inappropriate behavior are deleted from the self-modeling tape. This procedure is very different from self-observation per se in which trainees are confronted with instances of their actual behavior which may include proportionately more undesired than desired behaviors. This technique has been reported effective in promoting a variety of behavior changes including increasing assertive behavior (Hosford & deVisser, 1974), attenuating stuttering behavior (Hosford, Moss, & Morrell, 1976), promoting bedmaking behavior in hospitalized children (Miklich, Chida, & Danker-Brown, 1977), promoting verbalization with "elective mutes" (Dowrick & Hood, 1979), and teaching appropriate parenting skills to abusive parents (Barmann, 1982). Application of this self-modeling technique within the field of counselor supervision per se has been minimal so far. One encouraging study study (Hosford & Johnson, 1983) reported self-as-a-model as more effective than either self-observation or practice without video feedback in the

extinguishing of inappropriate counselor interviewing behaviors. Additionally, Johnson (1984) reported that counselor trainees who observed themselves in a self-as-a-model tape demonstrated less anxiety and were less concerned with how their performance would be evaluated than trainees who observed themselves in a self-observation tape. Despite this paucity of specific empirical support for its use in counselor supervision, however, there is a great deal of related research as well as theoretical support which would indicate that self-as-a-model would be highly effective in promoting the acquisition of appropriate counseling skills.

The specific training sequence used in Stage I is:

Step 1. Present didactic presentation of the behavior that will be focused on, including theoretical rational and basis.

Step 2. Co-teachers model an appropriate demonstration of the behavior.

Step 3. Class members break up into triads and practice the behaviors (having three trainees allows for the roles of counselor, client, and observer).

Step 4. The class then reforms into groups of two triads and one supervisor during which there is discussion and further role-playing if necessary.

Step 5. After class, each individual trainee then overtly and covertly practices the behavior in preparation for demonstrating mastery.

Step 6. Pairs of trainees get together and prepare videotapes during which they demonstrate several examples of the target behavior in different contexts and/or in response to different questions.

Step 7. These videotapes are edited by the supervisors in order to prepare a self-as-a-model tape of appropriate-only

demonstration of the target behavior.

Step 8. The trainee then observes this self-modeling tape alone, covertly practicing what s/he is observing, practices, observes, and so on.

Step 9. Assessment of the mastery of this specific behavior is through the trainee's preparation of a self-as-a-model tape in which s/he appropriately exhibits the target behavior several times. If this tape is adequate, the supervisor checks of this competency. If the model tape is inadequate, the sequence continues until a tape is approved.

It should be noted that during any give week, there may be attention and focus given to more than one behavior, depending primarily on the complexity of the targeted skills. It would, however, be expected that a separate model tape would be the ultimate goal for each targeted behavior. At this preliminary stage of training, these skills will be taught and learned separately while in later stages of learning, a primary focus will be the integration and appropriate use of these skills in combination. These self-as-a-model tapes would be kept and maintained in each trainee's personal "tape library." These tapes could then be utilized by the trainee later in the program if they experience difficulty with any specific interviewing skill and need a "refresher" course.

An additional benefit of this training sequence is that the students are exposed to specific social learning techniques, are given their theoretical bases, and are then able to implement these techniques on themselves. In this sense, the students' own

training becomes a valuable "Counseling Techniques" course in itself.

Evaluation and assessment. On each specific behavior, the trainee is assessed and evaluated as to their mastery of that skill. The assessment procedures are made explicit to the students so that they know exactly what is expected of them. Once all of the individual competencies are passed, the trainee is then videotaped with a confederate "client" (which excludes only peers and actual clients) to demonstrate the appropriate integration and incorporation of all targeted counseling behaviors. This videotape is then observed conjointly by the supervisor and trainee. The reasons for the conjoint observation are three-fold. First, the supervisor is able to provide direct feedback to the trainee. Secondly, it makes it possible to insure that the trainee is prepared to see "real" clients. Lastly, by observing a videotape with a confederate client rather than the genuine item, the student becomes acclimated to the process of self-observation with a supervisor present under the least threatening situation. This process is done as many times as necessary to insure that the trainee has the minimal skills requisite to doing actual counseling. If there are any specific deficits, the trainee is referred back to the self-modeling tapes that were developed earlier in the quarter. Once the specific criteria (which have outlined to the trainee prior to this process) have been attained, the trainee is prepared to move into

Stage II of the supervision model.

Coursework. In addition to the specific counseling training sequence, the students will be concurrently learning important counseling skills in their other courses. Ideally, there would be coursework and practica in: a) observation, monitoring, and assessment of client behavior; b) applications of research, statistics, and computer analysis in counseling; c) acquisition of specific counseling techniques (e.g., systematic desensitization, modeling, etc.); and d) establishment of a firm background in learning theory and principles. These courses would be coordinated with the counseling practicum *per se* to provide an organized, coherent training procedure. As mentioned earlier, the courses will provide exposure to many different theories so as to increase the sophistication of the trainee, but will focus primarily on social learning approaches. Additionally, there will be regular colloquia during which special issues and topics (e.g., counseling with rape victims, children of alcoholics, etc.) will be discussed.

Stage II. Supervision of Counseling Sessions

Upon confirmation of attaining mastery over all the basic skills presented in Stage I, the trainee becomes qualified to see actual clients from the community. All of these counseling sessions are videotaped and fellow students are required, as part of the practicum, to observe a minimum of two sessions per week.

Additionally, the trainee's individual supervisor is required to observe as much as possible of each session that their supervisee conducts. In addition to these sources of feedback, each trainee receives both individual and group supervision.

Individual supervision. Ideally, trainees would be matched with an individual supervisor on a variety of relevant criteria that have been demonstrated to be effective in advancing the learning process. Unfortunately, it is not the current "state of the art" that we have empirical data with which to establish trainee-supervisor matches. Therefore, students are matched, as closely as possible, according to personal preferences and choices of both the supervisors and trainees. Once this assignment has been made, the trainee and his/her individual supervisor maintain their relationship throughout the training program.

The core of the individual supervision process is the conjoint observation of videotape segments of the trainee's counseling sessions. In preparation for each supervision session, the trainee will observe these videotapes and select out both "good" and "bad" segments to share with their supervisor. In observing these tapes, the basic approach used is a modification of the Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR; Kagan & Krathwohl, 1967; Kagan, Schauble, Resnikoff, Danish, & Krathwohl, 1969).

Briefly, the modified IPR process in this model is that the trainee introduces the video segment with an explanation as to why s/he chose that particular segment and what s/he would like the supervisor to look for in the tape. Then, as they observe the segments, either the supervisor or trainee can stop the tape and discuss any specific aspects of the tape. This includes not only questionable portions of the tape, but also segments which are deemed worthy of positive acknowledgement. This is a crucial consideration in this phase of supervision -- the recognition of a trainee's strengths and not merely the focusing on weaknesses. It is for this reason that a supervisor must be especially aware of reinforcement principles and be able to positively reinforce appropriate behavior. It is hoped that through the use of such positive reinforcement, the students' self-confidence and self-efficacy expectations will be influenced.

For example, during the observation process a supervisor may identify an inappropriate interviewing skill and stop the tape to discuss the behavior with the trainee. The focus in this case is on the student's counseling behavior and care must be taken to insure that the feedback is constructively critical, i.e., alternatives are generated. When discussing any specific target behavior or counselor/client interaction, attention should be directed to exploring what the student was feeling and thinking that influenced the manifestation of the specific behavior. A major emphasis in this phase of supervision is to give the

trainee as much responsibility and respect as possible. This could be conveyed by allowing the trainee to generate any possible alternative approaches that may have been more effective and then role-playing these alternatives, if appropriate.

If the trainee has any specific problems and/or continuing skills deficits, then appropriate social learning techniques are applied. The specific technique selected, of course, depends on the particular concerns of the individual trainee. In determining the appropriate technique(s) to apply, it is helpful to conceptualize the counselor's actions within social learning theory's reciprocal interaction model of human functioning in which cognitions, behavior, and environment are considered (see Hosford & Barmann, 1984, for a full review). These techniques may include, but are not limited to, systematic desensitization, covert imagery, cognitive restructuring, reinforcement therapy, and behavioral rehearsal. One advantage of using this approach is that not only are the trainees helped in their counseling ability, but they are also exposed to the application of counseling techniques that they may later use with their own clients.

The primary approach to skills training, however, during this stage of supervision continues to be the use of self-modeling tapes. First, the trainees will have a "tape library" which they can refer to for specific skills. Additionally, the

trainee will establish, by themselves, new self-as-a-model tapes for acquiring any skills they need to acquire or for extinguishing any inappropriate behaviors. As in Stage I, the "bonus" for developing these tapes is the acquisition of an important counseling technique.

Group supervision. Rather than being designed specifically for the trainees' personal growth, as if found in many other models, group supervision in the present model focuses on helping the trainee develop their own professional identity and on extending the didactic training process. In this model, the students and supervisors jointly decide on relevant counseling-related topics that will be covered in the group (e.g., crisis intervention, suicide, counseling minorities, etc.) and then volunteers from among the trainees are elicited to cover these areas in a professional manner. These presentations may include, but are not limited to, lectures, videotapes, experiential exercises, and films. The goal of this portion of group supervision is to increase the trainee's self-confidence and self-efficacy expectations in terms of professional identity and peer support.

In addition to these didactic presentations, time will be allotted for each trainee to provide at least one case presentation to the group each quarter. These case presentation are to be organized and presented in as professional of a manner

as possible and follow specific guidelines that are handed out to all group members. The case presentations are important for several reasons. First, most clinical positions require them regularly to coordinate treatment packages for a client and/or to give supervision. Secondly, it provides an ideal situation for the trainee to receive peer feedback under the auspices of a supervisor. Next, these presentations can be instrumental in aiding a trainee's conceptualization of the client and his/her problem. Lastly, these presentations are helpful in assisting the student establish their professional identity as a counselor.

As mentioned earlier, group supervision is not specifically for the purpose of personal growth in the sense that it is not conceptualized as a therapy or awareness group <u>per se</u>. While receiving personal counseling is considered an important part of a trainee's personal and professional growth, the involvement of a supervisor in this process raises serious ethical concerns. Utmost of these concerns is that since the supervisor is responsible for assessing and evaluating the trainee's academic and counseling performance, there may be a conflict of interest and a minimization of the experience for the trainee. For this and several other reasons, this model considers the optimal approach to be the separation of the two sources of information. Instead, a mandatory requirement for participation in the program itself is concurrent involvement in either individual or group personal therapy. Depending on the needs and desires of the

specific group of trainees, this may include the formation of a group(s) comprised of peers and an outside counselor/group facilitator.

Coursework. During this stage of supervision, concurrent coursework focuses primarily on group counseling skills, observing, assessing, and monitoring of client behavior, and training of specific counseling techniques, such as systematic desensitization and cognitive restructuring. Ideally, the coursework roughly parallels and elaborates on the experiences the trainee is receiving in the counseling practicum. For example, since it is conceptualized in the social learning approach that research is a crucial aspect of the counseling process, one requirement of an academic course may be the devising and implementing of an N-of-1 research design with a client. In this manner, there is focused coordination among all courses in the program.

Evaluation and assessment. On an ongoing basis, the trainee is evaluated by the supervisor and is given immediate feedback as to both positive and negative facets of his/her counseling as reflected in the videotaped sessions. Additionally, at the end of each of the three quarters that comprise this supervision stage, assessment by both trainee and supervisor are conducted on the student's specific strengths and weaknesses. Based on these assessments, the two will devise an individualized "treatment

package" to help the trainee develop professionally.

Stage III. Self-Monitoring

In reality, rather than being a discrete and separate stage of supervision, self-monitoring is the ultimate goal of the entire program. In this context, self-monitoring refers to the ability of the trainee to objectively assess and evaluate his/her own counseling performance and be able to obtain resources necessary to advance their own counseling skills. The teaching of this invaluable skill continues throughout the trainee's residence in the program and is achieved through several avenues.

A. Observing others counsel. Throughout the duration of the program, each trainee is required to observe a minimum of two counseling sessions per week involving either a peer, supervisor or faculty member. Assignments may be given to attend to and record specific counselor or client behaviors in conjunction with other coursework. By being able to objectively observe other counselors, it is hoped that the trainee will be able to more fully evaluate his/her own counseling behavior.

B. Learning how to give and receive feedback. This crucial set of skills will be taught at the very beginning of the program. Focus will be placed on: a) teaching the trainee to give feedback in a constructive, nonaggressive manner that is specific in regards to the counseling interaction, and 2)

teaching the trainee to receive feedback in a nondefensive, open manner and how to elicit any additional information that may clarify the feedback. The impetus is to have the trainee begin to more objectively evaluate his/her counseling as being behaviors which are in the process of evolving rather than identifying personally with the counseling skills to the point of not being open to constructive criticism.

C. Observing own counseling sessions. The trainee is encouraged and reinforced by the supervisor for objectively observing his/herself and being constructively critical. The supervisor takes the role of passive observer and allows the trainee to assess the counseling session by themselves. In this way, the students begin to acknowledge both their appropriate and inappropriate counseling behaviors. The supervisor then reinforces this self-evaluation and thus helps to instill this evaluative behavior into the trainee's repertoire.

D. Personal counseling. As mentioned previously, the trainees are required to obtain personal counseling, either individually or in a group. This will help the student not only deal more effectively with their clients but will also insure that the trainees have had the experience of being on the other side of the desk -- as a client. The therapists will be selected on the basis of their theoretical orientation so as to maximize the learning potential for the trainee.

Evaluation and assessment. Specific criteria are established in relation to the trainees' acquisition of self-monitoring skills and are reviewed by both trainee and supervisor on a regular basis. This evaluation is incorporated into the Stage II evaluation and feedback is given to the students on areas in need of improvement and on strengths. The final evaluation is established by the supervisor at the end of the program.

Stage IV. Completion of Program

Certification of the trainee's completion of the program and either bestowment of the degree or admittance into a specialization is dependent on the successful completion of all course requirements, passing of all skill competencies, and satisfactory evaluation and assessment in all three stages. Failure to receive a satisfactory evaluation will mandate additional training and time.

## Supervisors

An often overlooked aspect of the supervisory process is the selection and training of the supervisor. In this model, supervisors are specifically selected based on their training and experience in both teaching and counseling. It is required that they have a strong background in social learning theory and techniques, are able to implement these techniques, and are able

to teach them as well.

One assumption is that these supervisors are doctoral students who are themselves in the process of learning. Therefore, they will be receiving feedback and supervision from a faculty member on their abilities to supervise, give feedback, edit tapes, etc. The faculty members will observe the supervision sessions and treat them in the same manner as when the supervisor observes a trainee's counseling session. The faculty member will be giving feedback, making assignments, and providing any remediation necessary. This remediation includes both the didactic imparting of information and the application, if necessary, of social learning techniques. By providing this "metasupervision," the specific supervisor is not only monitored to insure the quality of supervision that s/he is providing, but it also helps in his/her own development as a professional.

## Evaluation of Supervision

Having presented a supervision model in great detail, there remains a crucial issue that needs to be addressed -- the empirical evaluation of the overall program. This issue is perhaps the most difficult to resolve as research in counselor supervision has traditionally had serious methodological difficulties (Holloway & Hosford, 1984) and its implementation into the program would have to be carefully planned. Despite this global problem, however, there is a great need to determine

what supervisory strategies are most effective with what supervisees in what setting with what type of client. The exploration of this issue of prescriptive technology in the field of counselor education and supervision is particularly amenable to a social learning approach since research is so highly emphasized. One hopeful trend in this area that has been noted by Boyd (1978) has been the investigation of differential effects of various techniques and principles within supervision. Such an approach is easily implemented within this model and is encouraged due to the need for empirical support for various methods.

Ultimately, however, the true evaluation of any counselor education program is not the empirical value of any specific technique, but rather the quality of the counselors that the program turns out and the impact they have had on helping their clients change. This is an area in which little study has been done. Within this model, the monitoring of client progress within the counseling sessions is encouraged as an additional means of feedback to the trainee. Unfortunately, there will be have to be additional advances in our technology before there is much more research in this area.

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